A Way Forward on Climate and Energy
Timothy E. Wirth
President, United Nations Foundation

For the past several years, the goal of a comprehensive global agreement on climate change has drifted out of political reach. The world’s two largest emitters of greenhouse gases, the United States and China, have balked at national emission caps, the central feature of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, even as global temperatures rise. Last year was one of the warmest years in a period of steadily warming temperatures.

Yet national and state governments around the world are showing into line with this approach.

The Cancún Agreements encouraged the world to act on climate change through a number of separate measures on deforestation, technology cooperation, adaptation, and finance. Similar opportunities still exist on energy efficiency, renewable energy, agriculture and land use, and the reduction of powerful warming agents such as methane, refrigeration gases, and black carbon.

Nearly 20 years ago, at the Rio Earth Summit, the world embraced the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, which was signed by President George H.W. Bush and quickly ratified by the U.S. Senate. World leaders will gather again in Rio next year to discuss sustainable development; the theme of that meeting will be the green economy.

This is a field in which the United States cannot afford to lag. China is already setting the pace on energy efficiency — it has improved 20 percent over the past five years and has committed to continue those gains — the way forward on climate by moving toward a new energy economy, characterized by the smarter use of energy and technological innovation to make clean energy affordable.

The UN Foundation advocated for such a building block strategy — encouraging steps that nations can take in their own economic self-interest while also reducing their emissions of heat-trapping gases into the atmosphere. The most recent UN climate talks held in Cancún in December started to bring the world community

KEY TALKING POINTS
■ Affordable clean energy technologies are ripe for use around the globe.
■ Investments in energy efficiency are cost-effective for every country in the world.
■ Almost three billion people lack access to modern fuels for cooking and heating, and the smoke from their fires is a major threat to their health and the environment.
■ A building block strategy encourages nations to take steps to improve their economies and the environment — creating progress we can build on.

Lighting the Future for Haiti’s Women
Kathy Calvin
CEO, United Nations Foundation

A version of this article was first published in the Philadelphia Inquirer on January 16, 2011.

In the long list of challenges facing Haiti, going to the restroom shouldn’t be one of them. Yet, in Haiti’s sprawling tent cities, something as simple as a lighted pathway to the latrine can make a huge difference for a woman trying to survive the night without fear of sexual violence. In some of the larger camps, rapes are almost a daily occurrence.

Even before last year’s earthquake, Haiti was one of the most difficult places in the Western Hemisphere to be a woman. Nowhere in Latin America, North America, or the Caribbean are the maternal mortality rates higher, literacy rates lower, and life expectancy shorter than for women in Haiti.

Yet, even in this most desperate situation, there is reason for hope. Relatively simple actions can go a long way toward improving the safety and welfare of women living in temporary tent cities. One of the most common requests from camp residents is for lighting. They need lighting so that women and young girls can feel safer when walking to the latrines at the edges of the camps at night. Dark, unsafe conditions embolden predators who take advantage of women. That is why the United Nations, the UN Foundation, and other partners are distributing solar-powered lights to camps — and letting women decide where they should be placed.

A number of reports also indicate that teenage pregnancy is on a sharp rise in these camps. Haiti’s birthrate (which was already high prior to the earthquake) has tripled since January 2010, from 4% to 12%.

Without proper access to reproductive health services and education for the hundreds of thousands of women in tent cities, rates of sexually transmitted diseases can only be expected to rise.

...continued on page 4

www.unfoundation.org
and on renewable energy, in which China reportedly plans to invest $738 billion over the next 10 years to establish its global leadership.

China is far from alone in these efforts. The other BASIC countries (Brazil, South Africa, and India), along with Japan, Korea, and the European Union, have taken impressive steps in the same direction. In the U.S., the states have led even as Congress has failed to act. For example, in November, California voters overwhelmingly rejected the oil industry’s attempt to overturn the state’s comprehensive global warming legislation.

Renewable energy is particularly attractive to developing countries where the electricity grid is absent or unreliable, and where the dominant fuel source is often costly imported oil. But investments in energy efficiency are cost-effective for every country in the world. In December, the UN General Assembly designated 2012 as the International Year of Sustainable Energy for All. Building on the report last April by the Secretary-General’s Advisory Group on Energy and Climate Change, UN-Energy, with the UN Foundation in a key supporting role, will lead a Global Campaign for Universal Energy Access built around national actions in support of the Year.

Lack of access to sustainable, affordable, reliable energy — from low-carbon sources where feasible — is a critical barrier to reaching the Millennium Development Goals, particularly for poverty reduction. Some 1.4 billion people lack access to electricity, and a billion more are dependent on unreliable or intermittent sources.

Almost three billion people also lack access to modern fuels for cooking and heating, and the smoke from their fires is a major threat to health and the environment. This has been the focus of the Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves, launched by the UN Foundation in September 2010 with the endorsement of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. The Alliance is an ambitious public-private initiative to save lives, improve livelihoods, empower women, and combat climate change by creating a thriving global market for clean and efficient household cooking solutions.

Emissions of black carbon — soot from forest burning, cookstoves, and diesel engines — are the second largest contributor to global warming after carbon dioxide, but have a much shorter lifetime in the atmosphere — weeks, not years. Immediate action with known technologies — preventing deforestation and using more efficient stoves, cleaner fuels, and cleaner engines — is a building block that could slow the effects of climate change for a decade or more.

The core of the building block strategy is to accomplish what we can today and use that as a base to build toward more difficult goals tomorrow. This will engender trust among nations and confidence that the transition to a low-carbon economy is both possible and beneficial.

Were the Cancún talks disappointing or encouraging? The answer is yes to both.

The goal of the UN climate negotiations has been, and should continue to be, a global agreement to reduce emissions dramatically, decisively, and comprehensively. That is not politically possible today. But rather than bemoan human frailty, we must make what progress we can, when we can, where we can. The worsening impacts of climate change — on our poorest neighbors today and on our children and their children tomorrow — demand no less.

A Basic Right Shouldn’t Be Out of Reach
Tamara Kreinin
Executive Director of Women & Population, UN Foundation

The world has an unprecedented opportunity to improve the lives of billions of people by meeting the Millennium Development Goals. Yet, progress toward reaching these goals will be limited without significant dedication to the reproductive health and rights of women everywhere. Expanded access to reproductive health services and information has lasting and positive impacts on poverty, disease, education, gender equality, and environmental sustainability — especially in resource-poor regions.

The neglect of sexual and reproductive health has devastating consequences for women, families, and communities around the world. Maternal mortality rates remain disgracefully high, as do rates of extreme poverty, hunger, sexually transmitted diseases, gender-based violence, and childhood marriage. While access to reproductive healthcare and family planning services is a basic right, it is out of reach for many women in developing countries.

Here are the facts:

• An estimated 215 million women in the developing world want to delay or avoid pregnancy but do not have access to family planning.
• Forty percent of the 186 million pregnancies that occur in developing countries each year are unintended.
• Fulfilling the unmet need for family planning would reduce maternal mortality by 32 percent.
• One-third of the illness among women ages 15-44 in developing countries is related to reproductive, sexual, and maternal health.

In many parts of the world, girls and women have no alternative to early marriage and frequent childbearing. This results in high rates of maternal and infant mortality. Access to quality reproductive health services would lead to a reduction of at least 250,000 maternal deaths and as many as 1.7 million newborn deaths. Further, young women who avoid early pregnancy attend school longer, and educated women are 70 percent more likely to reinvest in their families, communities, and economies.

The 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo was the first ever international forum to recognize the connection between women’s health, the quality of women’s lives, and human progress on a global scale. Leaders from 179 countries agreed that empowering women — by advancing gender equality, eliminating violence against women, and ensuring women’s ability to control their own fertility — is a cornerstone of population and development policy. The conference attendees adopted a 20-year Program of Action focused on meeting individuals’ needs and rights rather than on achieving demographic targets.

The milestone agreement was one of the first clear articulations of the connection between population and development.
of the central role women play in eradicating poverty and stabilizing population growth. However, years later, the world is still struggling to make the conference’s program of action a reality.

Providing women with access to quality reproductive health services would lead to a reduction of at least 250,000 maternal deaths and as many as 1.7 million newborn deaths.

On the 15th anniversary of the conference, Secretary of State Hilary Clinton re-emphasized the inextricable connection between reproductive health care and global development. Secretary Clinton stated: “Reproductive healthcare is critical to the health of women, and women’s health is essential to the prosperity and opportunity of all, to the stability of families and communities, and the sustainability and development of nations.”

We must continue to hold global leaders accountable for the promises they made to the world’s women in 1994. Reproductive health and rights are cornerstones of women’s empowerment and critical for reaching global development goals. We cannot achieve one without progress on the other.

---

**EVERY DAY**

**THE UNITED NATIONS WORKS TO SOLVE GLOBAL CHALLENGES**

- Provides food to 108 million people in 74 countries
- Vaccinates 40 percent of the world’s children, saving 2 million lives a year
- Assists over 34 million refugees and others fleeing war, famine, or persecution
- Fights climate change and leads a campaign to plant 1 billion trees a year
- Keeps the peace with 120,000 peacekeepers in 14 operations on 4 continents
- Fights poverty and helped 300 million rural poor achieve better lives in the last 30 years
- Monitors, promotes, protects, and develops human rights worldwide
- Mobilizes $7 billion in humanitarian aid to help people affected by emergencies
- Leads international efforts in clearing landmines in over 30 countries
- Promotes universal primary education, reaching 88% enrollment coverage in developing countries

Information from the Outreach Division, Department of Public Information, United Nations

---

**New Congress, New Challenges**

Peter Yeo
Vice President for Public Policy and Public Affairs for the UN Foundation and Executive Director for the Better World Campaign

A few short weeks ago, the U.S. House of Representatives reconvened with the largest freshman class in more than six decades. On the other side of the Capitol, more than a dozen new Senators began work in the 112th Congress. The dramatic shifts in the House and Senate have put America’s relationship with the United Nations under the microscope. The Better World Campaign is leading the charge to ensure Congress understands the ways in which the UN serves American interests and the absolute necessity of paying our UN dues on time and in full.

Over the past two years, BWC, with constituent support, helped set the U.S.-UN relationship on a stronger footing. When the Obama Administration asked for nearly $1 billion to pay overdue bills to the UN, BWC lined up tens of thousands of Americans in support of this vitally important and successful initiative. Now the U.S. is up-to-date on its dues, but we face a more challenging budget environment on Capitol Hill.

With an economy that is sputtering along and a growing concern about increasing federal budget deficits, the new Congressional leaders have said budget cuts will be their first priority in the coming year. Funding for everything from HIV/AIDS to public television will be on the table. This also means new challenges for all of us who support full funding for the UN.

The United States has a treaty obligation to pay our dues to the UN. The UN bases dues on a calculation of each member’s gross domestic product. The U.S. is the wealthiest country in the world. As a result, we pay a greater share of UN dues than other countries — about 22 percent for the regular budget and 27 percent for peacekeeping.

America’s obligation to the UN is not a one-way street. Meeting our commitments also gives the U.S. leverage to set priorities at the UN.

The price to accomplish these goals is a bargain. Our allies around the world pay over two-thirds of the costs of UN operations. One study found that a military deployment in Haiti would cost the U.S. about eight times what it pays the UN to field a comparable peacekeeping force. Also, with every dollar the U.S. sends to the UN, U.S. businesses benefit through procurement of goods and services.

---

America’s obligation to the UN is not a one-way street. Meeting our commitments also gives the U.S. leverage to set priorities at the UN.

---

continued on page 4
A renewed commitment to American engagement at the UN promotes human dignity worldwide. The Better World Campaign and the United Nations Association of the United States of America (UNA-USA) are working hand-in-hand to ensure every member of Congress knows the critical role the UN plays. We will focus on educating new members of Congress about the U.S.-UN relationship. Our goal is to provide a counterweight to those who oppose the UN and its vitally important role. To help accomplish this goal we have revamped the BWC website (www.betterworldcampaign.org) to make it easier for users to obtain important information more quickly. Additionally, we have launched a microsite (www.unitedinpeacekeeping.org) dedicated to showing America’s interest in every UN peacekeeping operation around the world.

The Better World Campaign will be on Capitol Hill to fulfill the role envisioned by Ted Turner when he gave his gift to strengthen the U.S.-UN relationship. We will be at every hearing and in every office to showcase the work of the UN.

You can help us. You can join the thousands of people who are in UNA-USA chapters across the country. You can also be part of the BWC community and participate in our email alerts. We will use all advocacy tools at our disposal to make sure our policymakers know the impact of their votes on appropriations bills that fund the UN.

The UN’s role in the world is more important than ever. It is far more costly for the U.S. to ignore the UN and the problems it confronts than to pay our dues, on time, in full, and without conditions.

A renewed commitment to American engagement at the UN promotes human dignity worldwide.

The Better World Campaign and the United Nations Association of the United States of America (UNA-USA) are working hand-in-hand to ensure every member of Congress knows the critical role the UN plays. We will focus on educating new members of Congress about the U.S.-UN relationship. Our goal is to provide a counterweight to those who oppose the UN and its vitally important role. To help accomplish this goal we have revamped the BWC website (www.betterworldcampaign.org) to make it easier for users to obtain important information more quickly. Additionally, we have launched a microsite (www.unitedinpeacekeeping.org) dedicated to showing America’s interest in every UN peacekeeping operation around the world.

The Better World Campaign will be on Capitol Hill to fulfill the role envisioned by Ted Turner when he gave his gift to strengthen the U.S.-UN relationship. We will be at every hearing and in every office to showcase the work of the UN.

You can help us. You can join the thousands of people who are in UNA-USA chapters across the country. You can also be part of the BWC community and participate in our email alerts. We will use all advocacy tools at our disposal to make sure our policymakers know the impact of their votes on appropriations bills that fund the UN.

The UN’s role in the world is more important than ever. It is far more costly for the U.S. to ignore the UN and the problems it confronts than to pay our dues, on time, in full, and without conditions.